

a unanimous consent request to roll votes tomorrow.

Let me simply say that at this point I am not at liberty to accede to that request. I would urge the gentleman from New Mexico [Mr. SKEEN] to withdraw the request, and perhaps we will be in a position tomorrow when we convene to accede to that request. Right now I have a number of problems on my side of the aisle that will prevent us from agreeing to it at this time.

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. OBEY. I yield to the gentleman from New Mexico.

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that, and I am in total sympathy with it, but I think at least we can do the colloquies tonight and get those out of the way so that we can get to the substance matter. If the gentleman from Wisconsin would agree to that, I will appreciate it.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I do not understand what the gentleman is suggesting there.

Mr. SKEEN. If the gentleman would continue to yield, Mr. Speaker, we will withdraw that unanimous-consent request, and do general debate, and end it there then.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, perhaps we will be able to agree to the request tomorrow.

□ 2000

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the bill (H.R. 2160) making appropriations for Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1998, and for other purposes, and that I may include tabular and extraneous material.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HASTINGS of Washington). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Mexico?

There was no objection.

AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1998

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House resolve itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 2160) making appropriations for Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1998, and for other purposes; and pending that, I ask unanimous consent that the general debate be limited to not to exceed 1 hour, the time to be equally divided and controlled by the gentle-

woman from Ohio [Ms. KAPTUR] and myself.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Mexico?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Mexico.

The motion was agreed to.

□ 2000

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 2160), with Mr. LINDER in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

By unanimous consent, the bill was considered as having been read the first time.

The CHAIRMAN. Under the unanimous-consent agreement, the gentleman from New Mexico [Mr. SKEEN] and the gentlewoman from Ohio [Ms. KAPTUR] each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Mexico [Mr. SKEEN].

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, I rise to offer the fiscal year 1998 appropriations bill for Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and related agencies. The bill totals \$13,651,000,000 in discretionary spending and \$39,796,855,000 in mandatory spending for a total of \$49,447,051,000. This bill meets both the discretionary allocation of \$13,650,196,000 and its outlay allocation of \$13,967,000,000.

Mr. Chairman, this bill is the result of 13 days of hearings from mid-February through mid-March. The subcommittee took testimony from 252 witnesses, including 20 Members of Congress. We marked it up in subcommittee on June 25 and in full committee on July 9.

While our allocation was larger than last year, this bill spends about \$424 million less than the administration requested. There are only a few significant increases in the bill: WIC, rural water and housing, FDA, and meat and poultry inspection. Most of the programs are reduced or frozen at the 1997 level.

This is a good bill and a responsible bill. I want to remind all my colleagues that this legislation pays for critical programs that benefit us and every one of our constituents every day of their lives, no matter what part of this great country they live in. At the same time, it spends carefully and fulfills our obligation to move towards a balanced budget.

Mr. Chairman I want to express my appreciation to the committee members and the staff, and particularly to the gentlewoman who is the ranking member, the gentlewoman from Ohio [Ms. KAPTUR], who has been a great help to me. We have a great team going, I think, on this particular bill.

We have our differences once in a while, but they are mild compared to

some we have heard in the earlier testimony before from this chair. So I want to thank all those folks who make this thing a reality, and for the hard work they do and the tremendous amount of time they put in.

Mr. Chairman, this bill represents a lot of hard work and contribution by both the Democratic and Republican Members. I believe it deserves strong support from both sides of the aisle. I have not asked for a rule on this bill because I want my colleagues to have a chance to discuss and debate any issues which they believe are important.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, I rise this evening to commend our chair, the gentleman from New Mexico [Mr. SKEEN], an outstanding Member of this House to work with; all of the members of our subcommittee and the committee staff, for their wonderful leadership in putting together a solid bill. It will help keep our Nation at the leading edge for food, fiber, fuel, and forest production, as well as research, trade, and food and drug safety.

There is no question that agriculture is America's lead industry. Our farmers and our agricultural industries remain the most productive in the world, and they well understand, as we do, how difficult it is to maintain our Nation's commitment to excellence in agriculture in tight budgetary times.

Our bill appropriates \$3.7 billion or 7 percent less than last year's budget, and \$2.8 billion less or 5 percent less than the amount requested by the administration. Over two-thirds of the bill's spending is dedicated to mandatory programs, largely nutrition programs like the school breakfast and lunch programs and the Food Stamp Program, which comprise nearly 70 percent of the funding in this bill.

The committee provided \$35.8 billion in mandatory programs, which is a decrease of \$4.3 billion below the amount available for fiscal year 1997, and \$2.4 billion below the budget request.

The bill includes a total of \$13.65 billion for discretionary programs, which is \$599 million more than the amount appropriated in the last fiscal year, and \$424 million less than the budget request.

Mr. Chairman, those who serve farmers and work with agriculture are taught over and over again that there is a big difference between money and wealth. Our job on this Committee on Agriculture is to help create the wealth of America through the investments that we make in food, fiber, fuel, and forestry, all essential components of production agriculture.

Market-oriented farm policy means farming for the market, not the Government, and requires investments in research, some of it high risk, in conservation, in sustainability, in education and technology transfer, which will keep agriculture competitive as we move into the new century.